

NEW NOVELS.

YOUNG MAIDS AND OLD. By Clara Louise Burnham. 12mo, pp. 404. Boston: Ticknor & Co.

FROM MOOR ISLES. By Jessie Fothergill. 16mo, pp. 415. Henry Holt & Co.

"Young Maids and Old" is a novel of American life, dealing mainly with the tolerably well-worn theme of the futility of attempts by parents and guardians to choose mates for young people. Two old maids figure in the story. They are different enough in character, but alike in their fundamental sound-heartedness, and it might almost be thought that the author had taken a brief for the defence of a much maligned class. There are also two young maids, one a heroine and permanently innocent girl, considering that she had lived all her life in hotels and boarding houses; the other a pert and flippant young person from Chicago, who enters upon the scene equipped at all points with the least attractive habits and views commonly ascribed to the people of her habitat, but who undergoes a process of reformation at the hands of a Massachusetts young man which changes her altogether for the better. Phineas Thorne belongs to that type of New-Englander the conventionalists of which are more literary than real. These extremely self-contained, reticent, yet profound young men are much more frequently encountered in the pages of novels than anywhere else. Girls who resemble Susan Farley are, we regret, to say, more common, and the worst of them is that they seldom emulate her example and turn over a new leaf.

Polly Thorne is a wholesome, natural and quite lovable little woman, who perhaps is not to be blamed for failing to see that her irreproachable brother comes perilously near being a prig. Miss Trowbridge, the rich old maid who is the principal continuous resident of Proctor, is a good study, carefully elaborated and thoroughly fresh and womanly, even in her foibles, which are, with a single exception, slight enough. Irene Flanders, the heroine, would be a nice and even charming girl, if she were just a little less unsophisticated. As it is she is interesting, and like the rest of the company well up to the requirements of the situation, which are not too exacting. There are a great many pages in the novel, and this is its most serious defect. There are really so few stories which justify the employment of four hundred and odd pages in telling them. At least, however, this is a wholesome and pleasant tale.

Jessie Fothergill has followed a very poor story with an exceptionally good one. "The Lasses of Leverhouse" was flat and dreary and pointless. "From Moor Isles" is so full of many kinds of power that it is difficult to believe the same author wrote the two novels. "From Moor Isles" is not an international novel, though the scene is laid partly in England and partly in this country. The author, however, might as well have put her characters in Tibet as in Baltimore, for all the local knowledge she exhibits, her few references to American manners and customs betraying the most distant acquaintance with the subject. There are some judicial people-professionals—in the book, who give an agreeable view of a class more widely known for their difficulty in getting on together than for the constancy and devotedness of their friendships. There is also a highly interesting amicable contest between a pretty warden and a guardian who has fallen in love with her, but is sternly resolved to sacrifice and efface himself, being wholly without suspicion that she had anticipated him in her attachment, and consequently is made wretched by the measures which he thinks necessary for her happiness. A touching and sweet figure is that of Alice Ormerod, the ideal Lancashire farmer's daughter, who loves a man neither conscious of her affection nor able to return it. Poor Alice is the strongest character in the book, and she is doomed to "perpetual maidenhood" for her loving kindness and self-sacrifice—a kind of settlement far too clearly resembling real life to be acceptable in a novel. The average novel reader does not want strict adherence to truth; on the contrary, he wants something to help him be in the possibility of more cheerful and equitable conditions than he usually has dealt out to him. Once in a way, and when a great master like Balzac is at hand to manipulate the camera photographic reproductions of the human comedy are acceptable. The small fry of fiction, however, are safest in that region of romance whose gay and shifting colors aid their inexpérience and feebleness of touch by concealing the bad bluntnesses and giving an atmosphere of illusion to the whole picture.

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